

Title: Tenant Engagement Update

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1. Background

- 1.1. This report gives the Leeds Housing Board the opportunity to influence a draft Tenant Engagement Strategy, and to update the Leeds Housing Board on recent activity in relation to tenant engagement.

2. Main Points

2.1. An updated Tenant Engagement Strategy

- 2.2. The service has previously relied on a 'Tenant Engagement Framework' – that illustrates our local and strategic engagement offer. Due to the creation of the Tenant Voice Panel and other new ways of working we are now updating and strengthening this framework, which will become a new Tenant Engagement Strategy.
- 2.3. A draft Tenant Engagement Strategy is below (see appendix 1).
- 2.4. A key theme running throughout the reforms to social housing regulation and within the proposed consumer standards, is how landlords strengthen the way we listen, learn and respond to the wider tenant voice. The proposed draft Tenant Engagement Strategy therefore seeks to describe how we will do this and how we will make our engagement offer more inclusive so that we are compliant with the future [Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard](#).
- 2.5. The draft strategy is intentionally concise, so that it is more accessible to a wider audience. Subject to any initial feedback from the Board the strategy can also be shared more widely with Tenant Voice Panel members for feedback and once finalised, shared with residents as a whole. The Board is reminded that key parts of the activity that make up the strategy, such as the Tenant Voice Panel, was designed with input from the Tenant Scrutiny Board in their previous review. We envisage the strategy also being re-presented using LCC branding and adopting a similar look and feel to other public facing strategies.

3. Update on Tenant Engagement Activity

- 3.1. **The Tenant Voice Panel** - since the last update to the board, membership of the panel has increased from 130 to 194 residents. This includes widespread geographical representation, 48 residents living in high rise homes and 16 living in retirement life accommodation.
- 3.2. Promotion of the Panel is ongoing, using a variety of means. For example, in a recent email to all high-rise residents, which thanked TVP members for their input with a task and using this as a chance to promote to others the opportunity to join. Digital promotion of the panel is supplemented with flyers and posters for community noticeboards and other community locations.
- 3.3. We continue to hold informal quarterly 'induction' sessions, inviting any new panel member, or those longer standing members who would like a refresher, to join officers to talk about the panel, share examples of recent work and examples of what's coming up for residents to contribute to in the months ahead. These are online and in-person events, held at a different location each time.
- 3.4. Whilst the overall numbers of residents on the panel is increasing, there are some groups who are under-represented. For example, we are over represented by residents within the 45-64 age range but under-represented in the 18-29 age range (with 10 residents within this age group on the board). Similarly, there are 25 residents from an ethnicity other than white British which is below the proportion of non-white tenants as a whole. One in four panel members have some form of disability or impairment.
- 3.5. In recent months, different members of the panel through a combination of surveys and online or hybrid meetings have:
 - Been appointed to the Leeds Housing Board.
 - Helped design and shape the content of August's Annual Report for Tenants.
 - Helped design and shape the content of September's first annual High Rise Building Safety Newsletter.
 - Taken part in a focus group with the Retirement Life Service, for initial feedback on what residents value the most about the service and to help shape a future consultation approach with Retirement Life residents as a whole.
 - Reviewed key documents related to customer care standards for a new gas servicing contract.
 - Taken part in a workshop with IT colleagues to help design and test the 'High Rise Building Safety Hub', a web page for high rise residents to log in and access information about their building and their home.

- Given feedback on the Regulator for Social Housing proposed Consumer Standards, to add tenant feedback to the wider Housing Leeds response to the consultation.
 - Three TVP members have joined the Tenant Scrutiny Board and have taken part in helping gather evidence to inform the TSB's report into Damp and Mould and the advice and support we give to residents.
- 3.6. Future areas for development of the panel include:
- Undertaking a review of the first year of operation, since its launch in February 2023 as an opportunity to understand who is taking part and to identify gaps in any representation of certain customer groups. This is also an opportunity to get panel members' feedback on their experience of the engagement, or what we can do to make it easier for panel members to take part.
 - Establishing how we involve more panel members in the more strategic assessment and review of our services and self-assessments against the Regulator for Housing Consumer Standards.
- 3.7. In October the **Tenant Scrutiny Board** completed a review into the advice and support we give to residents about damp and mould. Following sessions speaking with various officers, reviewing information from other landlords and having undertaken a survey with residents who have recently had a general surveyor's inspection for damp and mould the Board are due to publish their report following their meeting on the 17th November. The report describes what the board did in terms of research and gathering evidence, what they found and thanks those who helped them, including the three members of the Tenant Voice Panel who joined them in this work.
- 3.8. The report has 12 recommendations, with the delivery of these improvements being monitored by the board during 2024. The report is in the process of being signed off by the board and will then be shared with residents more widely on social media and in the citywide tenant email.
- 3.9. The Board is now reviewing a range of performance and satisfaction information and will be speaking to senior officers and the Executive Member for Housing to help identify their next topic for review. The Board will also evaluate what has worked well in their last review and seek to further open membership to those on the TVP who may wish to help them on a review-by-review basis.
- 3.10. As of the beginning of November, the 11 **Housing Advisory Panels (or HAPs)** have supported funding for 119 local community and environmental projects to a value of £175,000. This equates to 44% of the available budget, with a further £222,000 currently uncommitted.

Due to some long-term absences, the Engagement Team have made some changes to the officers supporting the HAPs so that all HAPs are presented with a range of projects and choices to enable them to utilise funding in their local area.

- 3.11. The projects supported continue to help address local issues and priorities. HAPs also help connect tenants with local housing management teams and regular updates about performance and other issues or initiatives are shared with HAP members.
- 3.12. Following **consultation with high-rise residents** the service has progressed its engagement and communication with high-rise residents. Over recent months we have:
- With input from residents from the Tenant Voice Panel, shared with all high-rise residents a copy of our first [high-rise building safety newsletter](#). This focused on sharing key building safety information, along with promoting the availability of new information in line with the Building Safety Act.
 - Re-issued in all blocks an updated suite of posters for high-rise residents with key information about building safety and how to contact us. Where possible using more images and presenting information in an 'easy read' style. We are also in the process of installing two electronic noticeboards in the two largest blocks, Cottingley Heights and Towers.
 - Published our first [high-rise building safety resident engagement strategy](#). This is citywide strategy that describes to all high-rise residents how we share information, the advice and support we give, how we listen and respond to feedback and how we will measure the success of this strategy in future.
 - Improved residents access to information about building safety, launching a '[request safety information for a high-rise building](#)' and a '[report a building safety concern](#)' web page. In November we are scheduled to launch a 'high rise building safety hub', as part of the 'Golden Thread' requirements of the Building Safety Act. High-rise residents will be able to log on to a web page and in addition to the above, have more instant access information unique to their block and flat. For example, a copy of the most recent fire risk assessment, lift inspection certificate or flat entrance door inspection.
 - We continue to issue [bi-monthly updates](#) to high-rise residents with content influenced by residents and staff teams, in line with the themes of the resident engagement strategy.
- 3.13. Over the summer the service met residents from six high-rise blocks across the city to talk about the future of their blocks and support for rehousing. Engagement with residents was held at various times and

dates including evenings and weekends to reflect the respective resident profiles and was a variety of drop-in sessions using the mobile office, home visits and phone appointments. By the end of September, we had met with 80% of the 360 households. This engagement has been invaluable in helping inform residents, being able to respond to any concerns and talk through the support available.

- 3.14. Our priority tasks over the winter include working with residents on developing individual block resident engagement strategies and undertaking our second high rise resident survey to measure residents understanding of building safety so that we can focus on the key issues and assess how well our communications approach is working.
- 3.15. We have now undertaken 11 **virtual walkabouts** as an enhancement to the traditional walkabout offer. Offering walkabouts in this way increases the level of engagement with residents to help manage the environmental appearance of areas. Tenants within an area of interest are invited to participate and when convenient to them, give feedback by placing a pin on a map with a suggestion about what they would like to see improved/addressed or what they like and want to recognise about their local area. An example is the '[Holtdales Walkabout](#)'. This particular walkabout was visited by 159 residents who are now aware of this as an engagement opportunity, 58 of these viewed additional information and looked at other people's comments, with eight residents actively engaging, giving 55 comments and suggestions.
- 3.16. We are now in a regular pattern of undertaking satisfaction surveys quarterly and in line with the Regulator for Social Housing's '**Tenant Satisfaction Measures**' or TSMs. The approach to collecting this information and the most recently available results is the subject of a separate report to the Board. We have used, or are currently using the data to:
- Inform service planning and priorities for 2024/25.
 - Share with the Tenant Scrutiny Board to help them understand the wider tenant experience to influence their selection of future review topic(s).
 - Refresh local HAP priorities.
 - Monitor the effectiveness of a number of key strategies including our approach to high rise engagement amongst other key pieces of work and service improvement'
- 3.17. As previously reported to the board, with more up to date information about what tenants think about our services and in line with regulatory expectations on sharing more information and being more transparent, we have commenced sharing satisfaction information on a quarterly

basis. A summary of the Quarter 2 satisfaction information is drafted and ready to be shared in the November tenant email along with a hard copy insert in the rent statement that goes into more detail about what actions we are taking in response.

- 3.18. Our Retirement Life Teams continue to support **health and well-being activities** in the communal facilities of the many retirement life schemes, with new equipment recently purchased (via the local HAP) for Gascoigne House residents. Local housing management teams have also undertaken or are planning a number of estate action/clean up days or are key stakeholders taking part in cost-of-living related help and support events.
- 3.19. The circulation of our **monthly e-bulletin** to all tenants with an email address is rising slowly, as more email addresses are recorded. The October circulation was to 39,700 residents. This has an open rate of 45% and remains a useful way to share information about the help and support for residents, as well as to promote engagement opportunities – for example, giving feedback on how members of the Tenant Voice Panel have helped us shape services.
- 3.20. Local engagement continues through our support for the circa 60 **tenants, residents and community groups**. Our service offer, called [‘Communities on Top’](#) is used as the basis for more supportive conversations with residents groups across the city, with ABCD principles part of this. In October we provided further funding to West Yorkshire Community Accounting Service (WYCAS) to enable them to undertake free accounts checks for local groups so they can manage their money well and be better able to successfully attract funding.
- 3.21. Key services, alongside Voluntary Action Leeds and Leeds Community Foundation are now meeting regularly to work on a re-launch of [Funding Leeds](#) following the release of an updated website. This gives groups free access to local, regional and national funding opportunities. During September 2023, the site was visited 27,000 times and content accessed by 206 different groups across Leeds.

4. Priorities for year ahead

- 4.1. To evaluate the activity of the Tenant Voice Panel, and trial/put in place engagement with tenants about how they influence and help hold us to account in a more strategic way – for example, reviewing our self-assessments against the Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards.

- 4.2. Accompanying a new Tenant Engagement Strategy, we are also seeking to develop a more accessible and meaningful reporting mechanism to demonstrate our engagement activity and outcomes – in the form of an impact dashboard. This can be shared with a range of audiences including Tenant Voice Panel members, the Tenant Scrutiny Board, to residents via our regular communications and to the Leeds Housing Board and internal teams.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. The Leeds Housing Board are requested to note and comment on recent activity related to tenant engagement and offer support/comment on the updated Tenant Engagement Strategy.

Appendix 1:

Draft Housing Leeds Tenant Engagement Strategy

Potential forward by the Executive Member for Housing?

The voice and influence of tenants, residents and leaseholders can make a positive contribution to everything we do.

We want to listen, learn and respond to tenants, residents and leaseholders so that we can:

- Deliver high quality services.
- Improve tenant satisfaction.
- Develop a strong engagement culture where we value and act on all forms of resident feedback.
- Meet or exceed the future expectations of the Regulator for Social Housing and the future [‘Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard’](#)
- Comply with linked legislative requirements such as the Building Safety Act

This strategy sets out how we will do this.

Principles of our approach

- What we do and how we do it, is in line with our council values: to be open, honest and trusted; treating people fairly; working with communities; working as a team for Leeds and spending money wisely.

Our approach:

Our engagement activity will seek to:

- **Offer choice** for residents to give feedback and be involved should you wish. Acknowledging that not all residents have the same access to technology, skills or confidences or availability to take part.
- **Make it easy to give feedback** so that it's convenient and planned in a way to try and remove any barriers.
- Actively seek and act on the feedback of residents from **a diverse range of backgrounds and communities** as possible. We recognise some communities are less heard, so targeting our resources and tailoring our approaches to work with under-represented groups.
- Use **insight from the wider tenant voice**, as well as working closely in smaller groups to help us interpret and analyse. We don't expect a small number of tenants to represent or speak on behalf of all tenants.
- Involve those with **direct recent experiences** of our services, who are well placed to tell us about the on the ground reality.
- Adopt a **'go to them' approach**, making the best use of local resources, like using community rooms, and other locations where residents already come together. We also have a mobile office when no community venues exist.
- Be **honest about where we are in the decision making process**, setting out what we are hoping to achieve with input from residents, what other feedback has been and what will happen when.

- Communicate clearly and regularly the impact feedback has had, i.e., **you said we did**.
- **Innovate** in what we do, designing the most effective ways to capture and use the tenant voice with tenants themselves.
- Working in **partnership with others**, inside and outside of LCC
- **Invest in training and support** for those involved in any aspect of the Tenant Engagement. For example, attending events or conferences and meeting tenants from other landlords.
- Provide **support to help tenants, residents and community groups** achieve their aims.
- When working with communities, **start with what's strong** (not wrong), using asset-based approaches to build relationships and support others.
- Consider how we can **use the social value of partnerships** and contractors to support our engagement work.
- Maintain our **membership with [TPAS](#)** – the national tenant engagement experts who provide access to training, support and good practice regionally and nationally.
- Devote resources within a **Tenant Engagement Team** to deliver on our commitments.

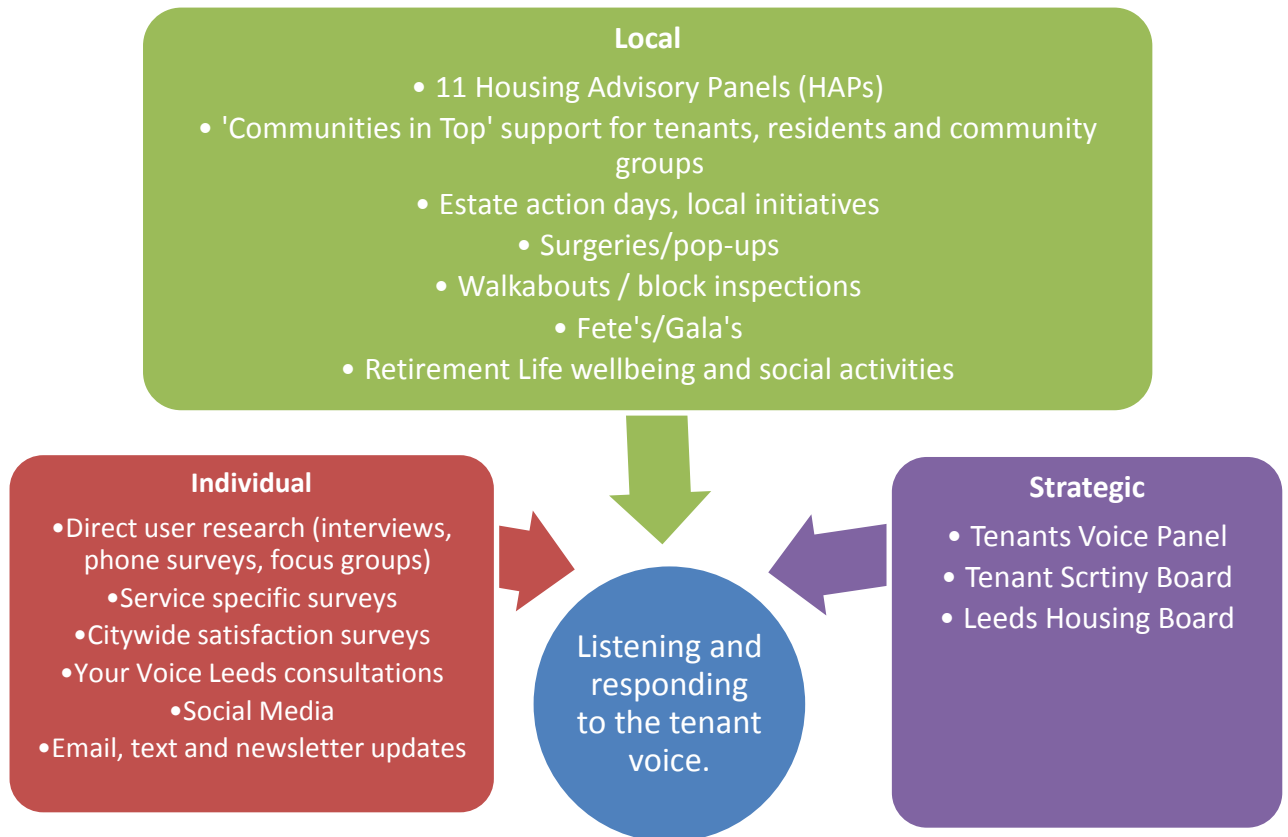
How we are going to deliver this:

The ways we involve and use feedback can be categorised as:

Local – the opportunities to effect change in the local communities where residents live

Individual – the opportunities all residents have to influence our services, regardless of whether someone is part of a group.

Strategic – how the tenant voice is used to influence our strategies, policies and decision making.



There is no one right way. We will use a combination of all the below for different issues at different times and look to find new ways of involving residents with residents themselves.
How will we know if our approach is working?

We will report to the Leeds Housing Board, the Tenant Scrutiny Board, the Tenant Voice Panel and to residents more widely how we are performing using the following measures:

- The overall satisfaction with the services provided.
- Satisfaction that we listen to your views and act upon them.
- Satisfaction that you are kept informed about the things that matter to you.

These are standard measures all landlords are required to collect. We will therefore be able to compare our performance to others. We will also assess our performance against the Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards, including the '[Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard](#)'.

For more information visit our website www.leeds.gov.uk/tenantinvolvement, email housing.involvement@leeds.gov.uk or call 0113 378 3330